

and law, would simply add new confusion and trouble to that produced by the customs and legislative enactments which we have inherited from the past and which were based on transcendental doctrines. So long as we do not know whether acquired modifications are inheritable or not, we are not prepared to elaborate a policy of marriage which can be dogmatically taught or civilly enforced. This much, however, is certain, — the interests of society are more at stake in these things than in anything else. All other projects of reform and amelioration are trivial compared with the interests which lie in the propagation of the species, if those can be so treated as to breed out predispositions to evils of body and mind, and to breed in vigor of mind and body. It even seems sometimes as if the primitive people were working along better lines of effort in this matter than we are, when we allow marriage to be controlled by "love" or property; when our organs of public instruction taboo all which pertains to reproduction as improper; and when public authority, ready enough to interfere with personal liberty everywhere else, feels bound to act as if

there was no societal interest at stake in the begetting of the next generation.

533. It is self-evident that there ought to be no restriction on marriage except such as is necessary to protect some interest of the parties, their children, or the society. The necessity must also be real and not traditional or superstitious. The evils of inbreeding are so probable as to justify strong prejudice against consanguine marriages. If primitive men set up the taboo on incest without knowing this, they acted more wisely than they knew. We who have inherited the taboo now have knowledge which gives a rational and expedient reason for it. The mores, therefore, still have a field of useful action to strengthen and reaffirm the taboo. There is also a practical question still unsettled, — whether the marriage of first cousins should be included in the taboo.